RESEARCH PLAN PROPOSAL

Press, Public Relations and Public Opinion- An Interplay

(An exploratory study of Jaipur, Rajasthan) 2005-2010

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Doctor of Philosophy

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INTRODUCTION

The 21st Century is the era of competition, mass awareness and information revolution. It is full of challenges and promises and is affecting all spheres of society, governments, educational institutions, industry and commerce, homes and citizens worldwide. Thus the advent of the third millennium has brought in an era of information society.

The new era is the result of rapid changes brought about by the new technology and the cyber world. Obviously, the information society offers vast scope and opportunities to human beings to identify information, to evaluate information, and exchange information for the benefits of the citizens the world over. In an information society, every human being is free to land in the cyber space in search of information. Information technology is a source for total development, for improving the quality of life and for promoting better service to mankind. It helps man to be more intelligent, informative, productive and competitive in the fast changing world.
But at the same time, in an environment that bombards consumers with millions of (often conflicting) messages each day, credibility is suddenly the most valuable currency of all. And the management of this explosion of information with the credibility, accountability and transparency is the most important function which PR is performing today.

The annual Trust Barometer surveys conducted by international public relations firm Edelman continue to show that in major markets around the world, people increasingly find "Public Relations person" to be the most credible source of information: more credible by far than paid advertising and even earned media coverage.

Hence, The PR industry has become an important actor in the present century. PR is essentially an exercise in developing mutual understanding, inculcating appreciation of each other's role in assuring the overall efficiency of an organization, the basic objective of this activity is to win friends and influence people in every possible, healthy and amiable style.

Therefore, the role of PR and its practitioners in dissemination of the requisite information at the requisite time in a dignified, graceful manner through all acceptable channels, nationally and globally, has started assuming extreme vital dimensions. This is particularly so as the market economy breaks physical barriers and expands its international arena in some very significant aspects of a country's life- economic, social, political, educational, cultural and even intellectual. The tasks for PR thus are not only carrying information, knowledge, but also enlightenment about the issues galore. To translate all the programmes, policies, problems and imbroglios in a language common people can comprehend, digest and imbibe is an Himalayan task and PR practitioners are trying to perform it as per the expectations with the help of the press which is the major tool of PR.

Press is serving as an important vehicle of PR in the dissemination of information and gaining credibility worldwide. The Press has developed into a national institution by playing an important role in the struggle for independence and in creating and transforming public opinion. It is a medium of inter-Communication between any authority, organization, institution and its public.

C.R. Srinivasan, Author of the Press and the Public rightly stated that - 'Many are the miracles of the modern age. Of them all, I think the greatest is the modern newspaper. It is not only a miracle in itself. It has laid the foundation for many miracles that we have witnessed in modern life. It makes and unmakes things. It creates and destroys the strength of the nation. It is a pivot around which revolves the universe. It occupies the nuclear position in the life of the world. The present is essentially the age of newspaper and the immediate future is not likely to be different'.

The immeasurable power of the press had been noticed by Abraham Lincoln when he said in 1861 that 'The Times is one of the greatest powers in the world, in fact I do not know anything which has more power except the Mississipi'. The Press was a formidable weapon in the hands of the European people during 17, 18 and 19 centuries. It helped them in organizing their struggles against feudal nobility. In the same manner, press served as the most important tool for the Indians in their struggle for independence.

The Power of Press and the opinion generated by it among people may be realized from what the great philosopher Emerson said- No power in England is more felt, more feared, or more obeyed, what you read in the

morning in the Times you shall hear in the evening in all societies, it has ears everywhere, and its information is earliest, completest and surest. For the newspapers inform the masses and not only inform them but awaken them and enlighten them.

The press is the most important, effective, extensive, popular and convenient, and the cheapest and the surest method of moulding and formulating public opinion. It is the most important of the elements which constitute public opinion. The study of public opinion is the study of human thought and behavior. It is the study of the sociology of knowledge, belief and conduct. As man's actions are guided by his background, present environment, education and many other factors, so is public opinion based on the structure of society, the political system, the education of the people and the historical background. And press plays a significant role in making the people aware about these factors which frames the public opinion.

Press works as a mirror to project any country's social, political, historical and other important aspects, which are being highlighted and propagated by Public Relations Practitioners in order to form public opinion. Consequently the press has become an important tool of shaping and moulding public opinion.

Thus, we can say that the Press, PR and Public Opinion have become trinity in the real terms.

The present study is an attempt to analyze the role and increasing impact of Public Relations on media and society in and around Jaipur city. The study particularly focuses on the role of Public Relations in influencing Press as well as public opinion during the past half a decade i.e. from 2005 to 2010.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A literature review is an account of what has been published on a topic by accredited scholars and researchers. In writing the literature review, our purpose is to convey what knowledge and ideas have been established on the above mentioned topic, and what are their strengths and weaknesses.

Books

- **Sushila Agrawal, (1970)** highlights the increasing consciousness among masses in the national & international affairs. Consequently the newspaper has become an important means of mass communication. The press has developed into a national institution by playing an important role in the struggle for independence and in shaping and moulding public opinion. It was a medium of inter communication between government and public.

  Hence this book studies the relation of the press with the government and public opinion but this book does not talk about public relations which is serving as a major tool of information dissemination in the present era.

- **C.R., Kothari, (1985*),*** highlights the art of using different methods and techniques covering all basics of research including the meaning, types, methods, tools & techniques, process of research, data analysis etc.

  It can be served as a complete guide for a research scholar as it helps in understanding the research problem, preparing the blueprint for the research, guides in planning, collecting data, interpretation, analysis and testing the results.

- **B.N Ahuja, and S.S, Chhabra, (1989)** tells that Public relations is that significant branch of Journalism that deals with the activities connected with improving and assessing the relationships. It deals with establishment of and

maintenance of goodwill as well as generation of favourable public opinion by the help of various mediums of media like print, electronic, web, outdoor media etc.

- **C.K., Sardana, (1995),** discusses the trials and tribulations through which PR practitioners have undergone in the last few decades. He has also discussed the challenges which PR will face in the new era where PR will no longer be an extended limb of the government. Modern means of communication have shrunk the globe. The audio visual media has ended the monopoly of the newspapers and playing an important role in moulding the minds of the people.

  In this environment, only those who are capable of competing well will survive. Others will just get washed away. This is an opportunity as well as challenge for the Public Relations practitioners.

  This book talks about modern means of communication and emergence of electronic media over print media as the major tool of PR but fails to estimate the impact of press i.e. the print media on PR and people.

- **Baldev Raj.Gupta, (1997),** throws light on various aspects of mass communication and different theories of mass communication which helps in the study of mass media. These theories provide a criteria by which media performance should be judged in the society. These theories mainly express ideas of how the media ought to or can be expected to, operate under a prevailing set of conditions and values.
- **Shailesh Sengupta,(1998),** throws light on the basic principles of public relations and communication theories and skills that apply to the professionals and organizations alike. He states that Public relations is a component of management discipline but even before the emergence of industry, business and government, public relations was in practice in people's daily life. Today the essentiality of this function is seldom questioned in a time when world suffers from conflicts in which confrontations all too often displaced communication. As society continues

to become more massive, more impersonal, more segmented, the need for public relations grows. The practitioners, individually and collectively, have made progress in improving their competence and in raising the ethical level of their work.

- **Chandrakant Sardana and Sushma Kasbekar(1999)** discusses the evolution of public relations as a means of public communication and process of PR as a significant way to establish effective communication with people and influence them.It also describes that developing public opinion in a right direction is the most important work of Public Relations. PR has a power to make and unmake the public opinion either by focusing everybody's attention on it or by sidelining it.

- **Manohar Prabhakar & Sanjeev Bhanawat, (2001),** analyses the changing scenario, current trends and breathtaking developments in the various forms of mass communication in the 20th century. The growth of media with galloping speed has caused significant changes in the life style, and social behavior of the people. It also deals with related fields of PR, advertising and education and training of media persons.

  But my research would add the impact of these fast emerging industries on the people who are the foundation stone of success for any industry or organization in a democratic country like India.

C.S.Rayudu, & K.R., Balan, (2001), has made an attempt to discover and communicate the kaleidoscopic facets of Public Relations so that the profession could be understood to mean that it is not a servant of any profession but it is a profession by itself like engineering, medicine, accountancy, marketing and the rest. The book touches on the know-how and do how not only of the public relations but also of the communications. It also dispel the notion that public relations is not an advertising and publicity dressed up attractively to woo the

public for personal gain and that public relation persons are 'conmen' contact men and go-betweens.

Again this book has not touched the role of media in the development of PR and its impact on people.

Frazier H. Moore, & Frank B. Kalupa,(2004) opines that today the demand and need for professional public relations services is increasing at great pace. Its function has become better understood and more fully accepted over the years both by management and the public. Hence, its professionals have acquired greater responsibility, respectability and accountability in all spheres. The recent developments and current communications revolution will advance public relations to an extent unrealized today.

This book deals with public relation and its developments but fails to specify how more developed PR is affecting people and changing their mindset.

- **Diwakar Sharma,(2004),** states that Public relations is fast emerging as a separate management discipline, distinct from management, mass communication and Journalism. It is playing an important role in our society by the management of information and appropriate use of communication.It covers the key elements of PR such as public speaking, effective communication strategies, relations with the media and advertising, crisis public relations etc.
- **Kewal,J. Kumar,(2005),** discusses various means of communication and the theories of mass communication which helps in understanding the media working and significance.

- **Manohar Prabhakar,(2006),** highlights various issues relating to PR, its role, needs, various aspects, innovations in PR, building PR mechanism in different sectors and so on. It states that the world has accepted the importance of Public Relations as a modern management tool and public relations experts occupy a very important position in management of organizations but we have yet to develop expertise in Public Relations and go a long way to establish it in complete terms.

Magazines, Journals, Research Papers & online articles

- **Jyotirmati Samantaray, *(January 2006),*** assesses the expanding role of Information Technology in all sectors of human development and how the Public Relations personnel can play a pivotal role at the grass root level by providing information to the People. The survival, and success of an organization in the present-day world largely depends upon the effective management of Information Technology, which is poised to revolutionize all aspects of social development through new thresholds in human connectivity.

  The main objective of good governance in a democratic country is to deliver goods for the welfare of the people with the willing participation of the people. Eliciting people's participation is the most challenging task in a democratic government. Here comes the relevance and role of public relations. Time has come to activise the P.R.O. personnel to cope with the changing needs of the time.

- **Larsson Larsåke (2007)** states that The PR industry has become an important actor in society and in the democratic process. The purpose of this research article is to examine the opinion state of this phenomenon. More precisely the question is: what trust do people have in the PR industry and PR professionals?
- **Ramesh Nair (January-March, 2008, issue 3),** states that during the last 6 decades of Independent India, an effective institution of Democracy i.e. Press has developed with a fast pace.

  Former President of Press Council of India, Justice P.B.Samant also said that 'Media has become the most important institution of our country, even it can comment on three pillars of the democracy i.e. executive, legislative and Judiciary. It has power to control and influence public opinion but at the same time it needs to be regulated properly. Its strength, freedom and powers should not be misused otherwise its credibility and importance will soon diminish.

A. **Candace White and Joosuk Park, (Nov2010)** states that Public relations has been portrayed in the media in a consistently negative manner over several decades, providing images that may become part of public perceptions. Perceptions about public relations affect the perceived credibility of the profession and influence whether people see public relations as valuable to society.

Second-level agenda setting and cultivation theories purport that mass media contribute to beliefs about social reality by creating a cumulative, general consciousness upon which assumptions and judgments are based, suggesting that public perceptions about public relations would match media portrayal. Results of a telephone survey found public relations is perceived more positively than media portrayal would suggest. Respondents viewed public relations as an important activity that benefits society by providing information and disagree that it is damage control, an attempt to hide or disguise something, or a non-substantive activity. However, public relations is associated with publicity, media relations, and the attempt of an organization to advance its own agenda.

- **Robert A. Kelly,(2010)** states that Public relations in the first place is to change the behaviors of certain groups of people who are important to the organization. The article highlights the importance of the PR in the new millennium. It says that success springs from the fundamental premise of public relations: people act on their own perception of the facts, and those perceptions lead to behaviors about which something can be done. When public relations creates, changes or reinforces that opinion by reaching, persuading and moving-to-desired-action those people whose behaviors affect the organization, the public relations effort is a success.

(PR consultant Bob Kelly was director of PR for Pepsi-Cola Co.; AGM-PR, Texaco)

- **Blake Miller,(2010)** Positioning a company as a market leader and measurably increasing media visibility is what successful PR is all about in the challenging

times of economic downturn and unstable economy. A strategic public relations campaign can strengthen a company's position and competitive edge during a weak economy.

Among the most effective public relations practices used by successful companies is thought leadership. Thought leadership is the art of communicating a strategic vision to others in an informative and convincing way. Masters of thought leadership will not speak above or below their audience, but directly to them. Understanding their public enables thought leaders to position themselves as experts in their given field while crafting their message in a way that influences their audience in a positive manner. (J. Blake Miller is Executive Director of BlabberMouth PR.)

- Extracts from the Seminar titled – 'Challenges in PR in the new millennium', held at Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, featuring such illustrious PR gurus as Shameen Abdul Jalil and Kim Chew.http://www.limkokwing.net/media/news/challenges_in_pr_in_the_new_millennium/

  Shameen, president of Institute of Public Relations, Malaysia (IPRM), talked about how the functions of a PR person has expanded. "It's not about dressing well, smiling and looking good. It isn't. The challenge lies in what you have in your head," She said "PR is about our thinking processes and what we are able to deliver. It's about image-building, dealing with issues management. The role is about reducing conflicts. The challenge is in maintaining it as a management role," she said.

  Kim Chew, who is president of PR Consultants Association, Malaysia, said PR in the new millennium is about staying ahead of technology to be effective. "Before it was about tackling the educated and the opinionated. Now it's very complex – because of the Internet, everyone has a say. PR is evolving because of the Net.

People are more knowledgeable. PR is a field that is entwined with the community, so we must be in the know.

- **Rita Marie Devin (15 Jan, 2011)** suggested that to eliminate doubt concerning our competence and our effectiveness, accreditation should become mandatory, and appropriate educational qualifications should be secured by practitioners and demanded by employers. Additionally, we should reform our PR education systems to teach standards of practice (including ethics) as well as valid and reliable research and evaluation techniques while enforcing professional standards of proficiency in written and verbal communication skills.

  Our identity, ethics and competence issues need to be addressed in the interest of protecting the integrity as well as the reputation of the public relations profession. As long as our own house is not in order, our credibility is suspect.

  Source: http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m4422/is_4_24/ai_n20525554/

- **Dennis L. Wilcox,** while addressing the participants of the meeting organized by the Public Relations Society of India, Hyderabad Chapter in association with Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Public Relations Council of India, Hyderabad Chapter and Global Forum for Public Relations on the Topic "Overview of Public Relations Practice in US" talked about the latest trends in PR.

  He points out the interesting feature of this discipline which is the feminization of public relations practice in US wherein 60% represent females and 40 percent males. More and more women are joining PR profession.

  Prof. Wilcox said 42% of professionals work in public relations firms while 22 per cent practitioners work in the corporate world. Only 3 per cent of total professionals in America work in government public relations.

Theories related to the study

- **Media Dependency theory –A very popular** communication theory.

- ✓ proposed by Sandra BallRockeach and Melvin DeFleur.
- ✓ states that every society is fully dependent on the various mediums of information.
- ✓ It proposes an integral relationship among audience, media and the larger social system.
- ✓ This theory predicts that you depend on media information to meet certain needs and achieve certain goals. Thus, it supports the study that media is serving as an important tool for information dissemination and finally helps in building public opinion.

- **Social Responsibility theory-**

- ✓ This theory owes its origin to the initiative of the Hutchin's Commission on Freedom of the Press in 1947.
- ✓ The central theme of this theory is that media organizations should not misuse the press freedom to promote the vested interests of the owners and that they should not be governed by profitability at the cost of public interest, social welfare, national security and democracy.
- ✓ The people have a right to expect professional excellence and public accountability from the media organizations.
- ✓ Thus, this theory opposes the concept of paid news and misuse of power by media and even PR organisations. As per the theory, media has some responsibilities towards society and public, so it should

guide the people and help in framing the opinion towards right direction.

☐ **Agenda Setting theory –**

- ✓ describes a very powerful influence of the media.
- ✓ Mc Combs & Shaw initiated this theory and made investigations to clarify it
- ✓ the ability to tell us what issues are important.
- ✓ helps us understand the pervasive role of the media.
- ✓ Press and Media do not reflect reality, they shape and filter it

☐ **Cultivation theory**

- ✓ Approach developed by Prof.George Gerbner, dean of Annesberg School of Communication, University of Pennsylvania.
- ✓ Originally it states that television has long-term effects which are small, gradual, indirect but significant.
- ✓ Broadly it states that Mass media shapes the perception of social reality.
- ✓ Mass media cultivate attitudes & values which are already present in culture, the media maintain and propagate these values.
- ✓ Thus, it is an important tool of PR and helps in framing, shaping and changing public opinion.

☐ **Two step Flow theory**

- ✓ Introduced by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson and Hazel Gaudet.
- ✓ It shows how mass media influence decision making.

- ✓ Information from media moves in 2 distinct stages. First to opinion leaders and then they pass on it to others.
- ✓ Opinion leaders are quite influential in getting people to change their attitude and behavior.
- ✓ This theory also supports the hypothesis that mass media influence decision making and then helps in the flow of information from Opinion Leaders, who can be called as PR persons, to the common people and plays an influential role in changing public attitude and thinking.

☐ **Hypodermic Needle or Magic Bullet Theory-**

- ✓ It states the mass media has a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audience.
- ✓ Media message like a bullet or needle is fired or injected into the head of passive audience which is immediately influenced by message
- ✓ It also suggest that media is dangerous means of communicating an idea because the receiver is powerless to resist its impact.
- ✓ It states that the power and effect of media is irresistible and thus, it plays an effective role in influencing people and changing public opinion. At the same time, it warns that media is dangerous means of communicating an idea as the receiver cant resist its impact, so the information given by media, whether the source is PR persons or any other, should be ethical, clear and guide the society.

Conclusion of Literature Review

A perusal of what has already been published on the subject gives an insight to the kaleidoscopic facets of Public Relations so that the profession and its importance could be understood in real terms.

The review also brings light to the fact that the media has developed into a national institution and playing an important role in shaping and moulding public opinion by the help of PR.

The review reveals that the Media is serving as a major tool of PR and is directly or indirectly influencing public at large.

PR is a medium of inter communication between government and people, organization and its public or any other insititution and its stakeholders.

Since the study focuses on the popularity of Press & Public Relations, the review helps us understand the growth of the media industry as well as Public Relations Industry.

Also it could be added that though all the books, articles, research papers studied under review have given information regarding the topic of the study but the topic taken for this research study is original and has not been studied yet.

NEED AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the present century, the media seems to have quite a large impact on the gullible public that watch/listen to them each day. The media insist that they are reporting the truth to the public, when they are more likely stating their own opinions to the public. This way media has become an important weapon of Public Relations in creating public opinion. The media do make an impact on the public's opinion of an event by helping PR Professionals.

Thus the need has arisen to make a perception study to assess the present scenario and inter-relationship between PRESS, PUBLIC RELATIONS & PUBLIC OPINION and to study the line of direction for future.

This study is being done to evaluate and analyze the inter-relationship or inter-dependence among Press, PR and Public Opinion.

As we know that the developments in the field of media are beyond expectation. To study its vast impact throughout the country and globally is not practically feasible, so the researcher had to limit the study to the capital state of Rajasthan i.e. Jaipur.

In order to understand the working and role of press, behaviour and strategies of PR Professionals and Media Persons and their impact on people, their attitudes, Survey would be the major tool of data collection.

Intensive and personal interviews, Focused group discussions and analysis of content of major newspapers etc would further help in evaluating the contribution of PR in shaping public opinion and role of press in it.

JUSTIFICATION AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Justification for undertaking the proposed research:

1) The Study will assess the impact of industry on common readers and public and their changed behaviour and opinion.

2) The study would help to find out the developments and the growth of the Indian PR & Media industry

3) In the present century, the media seems to have quite a large impact on the gullible public that watch/listen to them each day. The media insist that they are reporting the truth to the public, when they are more likely stating their own opinions to the public. The research aims to find out whether Press is forcing its opinion and helping PR in all the malpractices of opinion leaders.

4) When we talk in terms of PR, nowadays it is serving as the most significant medium to establish relations with the public, disseminating information among people and taking feedback from the people regarding any thing, service, product or person. And Press is serving as a tool of PR. Thus, the Research is an attempt to understand the impact, role and importance of PR

5) The study will provide an insights into the inter dependence, relationship and close interplay among the three major towers of a democratic set up- PRESS, PR & PUBLIC OPINION.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To identify the contribution of PR in shaping public opinion
- To analyse the role of PR in moulding public opinion with the help of press
- To explore whether PR is manipulating the information in order to influence public opinion
- To find out how Press obliges PR persons
- To analyse the relationship between Press and PR professionals.
- To assess the significance of Public Opinion.
- To find the out credibility attached to Media as well as PR

HYPOTHESIS –

- Public Relations influences Press and Press in turn moulds or create Public Opinion. Thus, Press directly or indirectly serves as a tool of Public Relations in manipulating information and influencing people.
- Though Press is serving as a major tool of information dissemination and has become the fourth pillar of democracy, yet its credibility is eroding considerably.
- There is an active interplay between Press, Public Relations and Public opinion.

PLAN OF WORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

(A) TYPE OF RESEARCH:

- EXPLORATORY & DESCRIPTIVE

"Exploratory research is intended only to provide greater familiarity with the phenomena (one) wants to investigate so that (one) can formulate more precise research questions and perhaps develop hypotheses. Such studies can be essential when (one) is investigating new phenomena or phenomena that have not been studied before"

The aim of the research is to explore and describe the facts and developments related to the topic of the study.

(B) AREA AND UNIVERSE:

The research will be conducted only in Jaipur the capital city of Rajasthan. Thus, the geographical limitations can be assumed to be a hurdle in the authenticity of the research. The universe of the study will be entire population of the capital city of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

(C) DATA COLLECTION

Primary data will be basically collected by conducting survey through the following sources-

- **Through a Questionnaire of Sample size 300** and the area for survey will be **Jaipur.** The research design will be exploratory and descriptive.

- **Through Intensive, telephonic and personal interviews** with educationalists, PR Professionals, administrators, sociologists, academicians, media persons as well as common public
- **Through the analysis of the relevant content of major newspapers** would further help in evaluating the contribution of PR in shaping public opinion and role of press in it.

Secondary Sources- The research study will be accomplished through the analysis of secondary information available in the published form, which includes data from textbook, journals, management reports seminar papers etc. The electronic data and results of surveys conducted by organizations were also important data sources for the report. To gather all the information that my report need, I will find related information by accessing reference books business magazines and journals & Web sources.

(D) Sampling Design

Sample type- Purposive and Convenient sampling. (Non- Probability)

Sample Unit– Sample of the study Broadly comprised of 2 segments-

- Industry people
- Common People i.e. the readers.

Now if we elaborate it further, the industry people are divided into 2 parts-

Media persons and

PR professionals

And if we classify the common readers, we will study 3 types of readers-

Primary, Secondary & Tertiary readers

(E)Analytical Tools

Descriptive Analysis

The data collected from the respondents through questionnaire will be anyalyzed on a descriptive basis with the help of tables, charts, diagrams etc. This method is used to find out the percentage of various answers given by the respondents.

FACILITIES AVAILABLE

Library

Internet

Journals

RESEARCH STUDIES

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The scope of study is limited due to the following reasons:

1) **Bound to only Jaipur**- the limitation of the study is it is limited to only Jaipur, which constitutes of a different set of samples. The industry i.e. media and PR, actions and strategies are almost same but its reaction on the people and the way they respond to it varies from place to place.

2) **Lack of awareness and curiosity** - the sample taken and the conclusion drawn can be led to only one side if there is lack of awareness and curiosity about the industry among the people.

3) **Reader's biasness:** Biased attitude of readers towards information industry can affect the study. Also the responses from industry people can be prejudiced.

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